

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 /070 W

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R 221145Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2098

INFO COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMIPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 0823

FOLLOWING MSG SENT ACTION SAIGON, INFO USDAO/SAIGON 20 JAN 75
BEING REPEATED TO YOU

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 047

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJ: TENSION RETURNS TO TAY NINH CITY

REF: BIEN HOA 041

1. CONGEN OFFICER SPENT MOST OF SATURDAY AND SUNDAY (JANUARY 18-19)
IN TAY NINH CITY AND REPORTS THE IMPRESSIONS WHICH FOLLOWS.

2. THE MAIN DOWNTOWN AREA OF TAY NINH CITY NEAR PROVINCE HQS WAS
DESERTED AND TENSE FOLLOWING THE SATURDAY COMMUNIST SHELLING WHICH
COMMENCED AT APPROXIMATELY 0845 HOURS AND CONTINUED THROUGHOUT
THE DAY WITH AN ESTIMATED 20 ROUNDS OF 85MM ARTILLERY AND 39 ROUNDS
OF 122MM ROCKET. ONE ROCKET MADE A DIRECT HIT ON THE SECTOR
COMMANDER'S OFFICE AND ANOTHER ROCKET PENETRATED A TOC BUNKER
BUT NEITHER CAUSED ANY CASUALTIES. THREE ROCKETS IMPACTED AT THE
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MILITARY HOSPITAL RESULTING IN TWO NURSES WOUNDED AND THE AMBULANCE

AND PHARMACY DESTROYED. TOTAL CASUALTIES IN THE CITY FOR THE DAY WERE ONE CIVILIAN KILLED, ONE SOLDIER KILLED AND FIVE PERSONS WOUNDED. THE LOW NUMBER OF CASUALTIES CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE FACT THAT MANY PEOPLE HAD DESERTED THE DOWNTOWN AREA AND THAT MOST OF THOSE WHO REMAIN CONSTRUCTED SOME SORT OF BUNKER.

3. FEW PEOPLE WERE ON THE STREETS OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA AND AN ESTIMATED 90 PERCENT OF THE SHOPS THERE WERE CLOSED. MILITARY PERSONNEL TRAVELING AROUND THE TOWN WERE ALMOST ALWAYS SEEN WEARING FLAK JACKETS AND HELMETS. THE PROVINCE CHIEF ESTIMATES THAT AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION LIVING IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF PROVINCE HQS HAVE DEPARTED. MOST OF THEM HAVE LEFT FOR SAIGON BUT SOME HAVE MOVED TO THE AREA EAST OF SECTOR NEAR THE CAO DAI HOLY SEE AND LONG HOA MARKET WHICH THEY APPARENTLY REGARD AS SAFER. THE "NEW MARKET" LOCATED APPROXIMATELY ONE KM WEST OF PROVINCE HQ HAD APPROXIMATELY 30 PERCENT OF ITS NORMAL TRADE. IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE DESERTED STREETS AND TENSION FOUND AROUND THE TAY NINH SECTOR, THE LONG HOA AND CAO DAI HOLY SEE AREA APPEARED NORMAL WITH ITS MARKET FLOURISHING AND SOUP SHOPS FILLED.

4. TAY NINH PROVINCE CHIEF, COL TRAN VAN TY, IN TWO CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CONGEN OFFICER, SAID THAT MANY OF THE POPULATION WHO HAD STARTED RETURNING AFTER THE JANUARY 14 SHELLING (REFTEL) HAD ONCE AGAIN FLED FOLLOWING THE SATURDAY MORNING ATTACK. TY CONTINUED TO FEEL THAT THERE WAS NO THREAT OF GROUND ATTACKS AGAINST TAY NINH CITY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE BUT THOUGHT THAT COMMUNIST FORCES MIGHT PROBE THE OUTLYING RVNAF POSITIONS AROUND THE TOWN. HE NOTED THAT ON JANUARY 17 VNAF HAD DROPPED A LARGE AMOUNT OF IGNITED GASOLINE ONTO A COMMUNIST POSITION IN THE VICINITY OF BA DEN MOUNTAIN WHICH RESULTED IN AN ENORMOUS SECONDAY EXPLOSION AND HE SPECULATED THAT THE SATURDAY SHELLING MIGHT BE A COMMUNIST REPRISAL. ALL IN ALL, HOWEVER, HE FELT THE GVN HAD THE MILITARY SITUATION WELL IN HAND AND THAT THE CITY WILL SURVIVE THIS ORDEAL.

PETERS
UNQUOTE
MARTIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SAIGON00823
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750024-0337
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750130/aaaabadl.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BIEN HOA 041
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUL 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TENSION RETURNS TO TAY NINH CITY
TAGS: MOPS, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006